THE EYE:

BY OBADIAH OPTIC.

——VARIOUS OBJECTS FROM THE SENSE,
VARIOUSLY REPRESENTING. MILTON.

Vol. I.] THURSDAY, JUNE 30, 1808. [No. 26.

Tanta quidem est in omni pacto et sermone viri boni fides, ut eum jurejurando adstringere non sit opus apud eos quibus est notus; sed ubi res aguntur eorum quibus viri probitas non est perspecta; illius et promissa et testimonia jurejurando sunt confirmanda. HUTCHESON ELEMENT. ETH.

So great indeed is the confidence that is placed in the promise or assertion of a good man, by those to whom he is known, that *there is no necessity* to bind *him* by an oath; but on a trial where the probity of the witness is not fully acknowledged or known, his promises and evidence must be confirmed by an oath.

"CUSTOM, says JOHNSON, is commonly too strong for the most resolute resolver, though furnished for the assault with all the weapons of philosophy." The claim of antiquity is a strong one: The prejudices which we entertain for the opinions of our ancestors, the practice of nations, and the authorities of men highly esteemed for their extensive learning and goodness of heart, are so deeply fixed in the human mind, that error itself is, not seldom, tenaciously embraced and persevered in without once considering its nature or tendency: My father acted thus, or believed as I do; such has been the practice for ages; great men have embraced and defended this opinion, and many similar expressions lull the man to rest, and the enquiry, too generally, proceeds no farther; nay, very often, he who dares to examine opinions formerly received, and sanctioned by great names, is treated with the utmost contempt; to prove this, we need not have recourse to the days of persecution and superstitious intolerance; the most superficial observer must admit, that every departure from the ancient mode of practice; in physic, agriculture, mechanics, in short, in any art or science, raises against the inventor an host of opponents; the value of the improve-

ment, if examined at all, is examined but slightly, pronounced good for nothing, and the dull tract approved of which is venerable only for its antiquity.

On this foundation stand oaths, they were practised among the Jews, and appear sanctioned under the Mosaic dispensation, so was the *lex talionis*, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, the law of divorcement, nay, even poligamy was not forbidden. These were days of darkness, but we have received a more correct rule to walk by than their practices. Oaths also were in use among the gentile nations, and were often administered with great formality.

Indeed, the ancient philosophers were much more afraid of swearing falsely than we are, to avoid which, an oath, even before a judge, was never admitted but when no proof could be obtained; PLATO's precept was, No oath must be administered wantonly, only on important occasions, and with the strictest caution. And the philosopher CLENIAS was so scrupulous, that rather than swear, he lost three talents to which he had a right. How ought Christians whose divine teacher said "Swear not at all," blush when they thus view the practice of the heathen philosophers, the strictness of the one, and the laxness of the other? Must they not say, condemning themselves, it is true we have more light—they more piety?

If indeed that high sense of religious awe, lest the guilt of perjury should be contracted, were still found among us exerting all its influence, perhaps the use of oaths might be justifiable in some cases; but will not every thinking man agree with me, that their frequency has taken away their salutary effect?

The oaths to be taken by the army and navy, on entering universities, entering the church, and almost all societies of all kinds, must certainly tend to deep impiety, and may we not to this source, in a great measure, trace the number of profane oaths with which our ears are assailed every day, and also the very frequent and irreverent use of the name of GOD on the most trivial occasions.

That justice would be as well administered should oaths no longer be used, we can adduce positive proof. The society of Friends affords a demonstrative evidence; among them, justice is purely given, yet they admit of no oaths, and in our courts of justice, every man who gives his word that he has religious scruples against taking an oath is permitted to affirm, and we have never experienced less attention to truth in the

affirmer than in the swearer, nay, on the contrary, it has become proverbial that he who swears will lie.

Let me not be understood as if I considered that a witness in a court of justice affirming that he will, in the cause at issue, speak the truth according to his knowledge, is less bound than if he swear according to any mode now established—no, he assuredly is equally bound; but the great test of all practices, *experience*, has made it abundantly evident, that it has led to the irreverent abuse of God's name, it has opened the door to mental reservations, to equivocations, to make attempts to deceive from a consideration that the binding part of the oath was in kissing the book, a custom in the days of ignorance introduced, borrowed from the heathen, who solemnly kissed their idols; and before the reformation, with great deference was applied to the Corpus Christi, and afterwards, from hence it journeyed to the New Testament with a cross, where it now rests.

The observations that have been made on this important subject, it is hoped will have a tendency to induce men, well wishers to the cause of truth, judges, who see every day the effects of this evil, jurors, who cannot, without much grief, notice the progress of this practice, magistrates, before whom oftimes oaths pass off as light as air, and in an especial manner, ministers of all denominations, who watch for the good of souls, to unite and finally bring men to be truly obedient to the precept of our great master—"Swear not at all.

OBADIAH OPTIC.

ORIGINAL.

THE SPECTACLES.—No. XVI.

Loca jam recitata revolvimus. HOR.

The old subject over again.

THE intercourse of the sexes is not sufficiently attended to, nothing is of more importance to a young lady than the character and conduct of those gentlemen whom she permits to visit her; formerly it was customary when one gentleman wished to introduce another to a female friend, first to ask her permission, and allow her an opportunity of acquiring some information whether her assent would be proper, and by this mean, few inconveniences arose from the company which

surrounded the fair one ; but alas! this golden rule has grown obsolete, and a pernicious custom is the substitute ; without consulting parents, friends, or any one interested in her welfare, or even hesitating to reflect, she permits one gentleman to introduce another, him a third, and as many more as convenient, without knowing any of them except by name. I am confident, were this matter seriously considered by the ladies, they would refuse to commence an intimacy with any man until he were perfectly known to be a proper object for their notice. It is unnecessary to mention the numerous instances of misery which have proceeded from a neglect of this caution, they are too well known to many of my readers. It is a gross and unpardonable insult, if properly considered, for gentlemen to take this liberty without the consent of the lady, it is not only assuming the right of choosing companions, but it is forcing her to accept the acquaintance of any gentleman, independent of her will, it is no matter of what vices, or crimes he may be guilty—the gentleman and the rake—the sober man and the debauchee are placed on an equal footing, and each has the same right to crowd round her levee and attend her in public: Think, my fair readers, in what a perilous situation you are placed, and abolish a custom at once so injurious and disgraceful.

I am no censor on the conduct of the ladies farther than is necessary to point out their errors. The gentlemen conceive it gallantry to persuade a lady she does nothing inconsistent with her dignity—does she commit an improper action, he smiles—does she mention her sorrow, he swears it was just as any person would have acted when placed under similar circumstances—does she blame her indiscretion, he flatters her. —The ladies receive too credulously the assertions of the opposite sex ; they view men as they appear, not as they are ; they are not aware that many make them the mere machines of recreation, and visit them more as pastime than on account of the satisfaction their company affords ; nor is it often the case that the unguarded expression of a lady is consigned to its expected oblivion. A female should not encourage the flatterer in his insignificant encomiums, nor seem pleased with the gallant who is always giggling at the point of her elbow ; such conduct disgusts the sensible and worthy man who courts a lady's society for her amiableness, and has no other than honourable intentions in keeping her company. Let a female reflect well, that whatever means she may think

preferable to procure respect, there are no words whose truth will bear the test better than these,

"Beauties in vain their pretty eyes may roll,
Charms strike the sight, but MERIT wins the soul."

I was not a little surprised the other evening at witnessing a gentleman's success in ingratiating himself into the favour of the ladies: At a large party, where a number of ladies were present, this Mr. S. made his appearance; in a moment all eyes were fixed with pleasure upon him, except I believe one lady who did not seem to notice him. This Mr. S. is a gentleman whose dress is the chief object of his attention, his father's death may probably produce him some wealth, otherwise his pecuniary means are small. A liberal education has been forced upon him at college, and with that and a perfect knowledge of plays and novels, he appears to the ladies as a man profoundly learned; the one who is chosen as his partner in a dance, or by whose side he seats himself, conceives herself peculiarly favoured; in his convivial moments he vaunts to his companions of being able to gain the affection of any woman, and looks upon himself as the idol of the fair sex; his person is good, and his countenance prepossessing, but as to other qualifications, he is in no ways engaging. He is what may be properly called a *ladies' man*, and consults with care their dispositions, in order to make his conversation pleasing. In this party was Miss B. a vain and conceited creature, who prided herself much upon the superiority of her personal charms, and deemed herself a suitable object of respect on account of her fortune: To her Mr. S. first addressed himself, and after bestowing some pilfered compliments on her beauty, for she was in truth handsome, he railed with much asperity against the broad shoulders, large feet, and dark complexions of the other ladies, and inveighed against some in the company whose fortunes would not allow extravagant expences in the useless and superfluous ornaments of fashionable pride, to which she nodded approbation, and casting every moment affected glances at her person and dress, declared that the distinction of rank was not enough refined. To Miss H. who was a noted prude, he condemned that affability which renders social intercourse worth enjoyment, and impresses upon its possessor the current stamp of welcome; he declaimed against those females who command the affections of the opposite sex by condescending to treat

them as rational animals, and so far did he please, that in an audible whisper, she smilingly exclaimed, "Who made you such a charming judge of human nature!" To Miss D. who delighted in amassing pocket money at the expence of her companions, he pourtrayed in brilliant colours the utility of card playing, and that he might display his historical knowledge, stated the origin of cards to have been an invention of a subject of CHARLES VI. of France, and that they removed, in a great measure, an hypochondriasis under which his majesty laboured. And in this manner did he proceed, praising where no praise was due, and encouraging the defects and vices of each lady; converting all their faults into merits. He approached the lady who was indifferent to his smiles or censure; the superiority of her mental accomplishments soon drowned the voice of flattery; she politely told him that he had mistaken her character, she was no goddess, and could not therefore permit him to kneel to pay his devotions; on which he retired, pleasing himself with hopes of better success in another part of the room.

The ladies are too indulgent in their views of the gentlemen. Is a man handsome? they style his clownish silence, diffidence and call an impudent forwardness, pleasing vivacity. Does a man of sense utter a sensible expression? it is looked upon as pedantry—who ever hears any more instructing topic of conversation among many of our ladies, than the fashions of the day, or the state of the weather? Indeed, numbers of the gentlemen are unable to support any other subjects, and on such, too frequently, do the ladies lavish applause.

My fair readers will, I hope, rate gentlemen according to their merits, and never suffer a handsome form or trifling accomplishments, when not connected with a sound judgment and real worth, to allure their affections. And another serious circumstance must occur to them, that a lady will never procure for a husband a worthy and respectable man whilst she encourages those fops and fools, who make it their business to appear agreeable by flattery, or pretending such fondness for the sex as induces them to neglect every thing but a lady's toilet.

I am by no means to be understood as making my remarks universal; there are some ladies who do honour to their sex by their choice of companions, and some gentlemen who deserve the favour of the fair; but in general, it is too true, that foppery is preferred to modesty, and flattery supersedes candour.

T.

ORIGINAL.

THE TORTOISE.—No. XVI.

In words, as fashions, the same rule will hold,
Alike fantastic if too new or old. POPE.

SOME time ago the question was asked me, Why I chose a title for my papers which certainly had no affinity to a periodical work, to wit—'*The Tortoise?*'—the answer to which I have deferred till the present; and here I must beg leave to differ from the opinion of my sagacious catechist; for though abstractedly considered, a tortoise bears no resemblance to a literary essay, yet I cannot otherwise than perceive a strong resemblance both in its substance and habits to a series of numbers; with respect to habits, the animal moves slow, but still progresses; so with the writer, his progress is slow, but still by perseverance he gains ground; they are alike also in substance, for as the animal is composed of various nutritious parts, some of which are relished, others admired, and the whole esteemed a luxury by those whom fashion or partiality has converted into epicures, so with my papers, they are diversified, and doubtless have been received with both cordiality and indifference, as the varied tastes of readers decided on their merits; I cannot boast of their beauty of style or excellence of thought, yet I believe the good intention of the author is visible in them, and though superficial in their structure, they may serve to induce the reader seriously to reflect on the subjects suggested, and peradventure amuse some.

The animal pursues his course in an humble sphere, is by no means winning in appearance, is inclosed in a shell which has no attraction for the eye in its original state, but susceptible of a polish which renders it valuable both for ornament and use—this shell also serves him as armour to shield him from the rude attacks of those whose humanity is not of so condescending a nature as to extend to a harmless animal—in each of these particulars, a resemblance to the author is discernible; for, though supercilious beings, affecting criticism, may endeavour to torture his feelings, he is secure from their attacks in an humble situation, beneath the covering of correct motives; and, as when the animal becomes torpent, he is entirely withdrawn into his shell, so now, when ceasing to write, I can use the like privilege; and should my

numbers hereafter be noticed by the curious, I trust they will not be treated in a manner foreign from the purposes for which the author intended them, which were to correct error and scourge vice, to promote the cause of virtue, and consequent happiness of his fellow beings. TIM TITULAR.

SELECTED.

AURORA, OR THE APPARITION.

HAVING lately had a very sober party, to cards and supper, at my country-house, I got early to bed, before one o'clock: I slept soundly for some hours; but when I awoke, to my astonishment, I beheld a female figure, modestly clad in a light robe, with a mild, serene countenance; who, moving from towards the window, came and stood at the feet of my bed. I was going to speak, and express my surprise, when she prevented me, and thus began:—

"Do not be alarmed, sir, though I am now a stranger to you, as you have not seen me since you were a school-boy; yet I was well known to your good father and mother, with whom I was upon the most intimate footing. I breakfasted with them every day in the week, and sometimes dined with them; and was a peculiar favourite with your excellent mother. I now come daily into your village, and am well known to the farmers and poor people, to whom I am a true friend; and they always rejoice to see me, as I put them in a way to get their livelihood, and by a wholesome elixir, with which I supply them gratis, and by my consolatory and cheerful conversation, keep them in health and spirits. Nay, the very birds of the air seem to know me, and express their joy at my approach."—Astonishment kept me silent, and she proceeded in her harangue:

"I should have introduced myself to you, (however unwelcome) out of regard to your father and mother; but am now excluded, I find by the express orders of your near friend, this pretended widow, in her sable weeds forsooth, (Mrs. Hecatissa Midnight, I think they call her) to whom you are of late so unaccountably attached; and who it seems, has a particular dislike to me, as she slips away whenever I happen to appear, being conscious that I outshine and eclipse her; and knows also that I was a friend to your family, and must be concerned to see her encourage you in revelling, gaming, and

every thing that is bad. And indeed, sir, if you do not disengage yourself from her enchantments, she will be the ruin of your health, your fortune, and your reputation. All decent people are astonished at your infatuation, (for I will speak my mind now I have got admittance) since, in spite of her silver crescent, which she wears, I suppose, as an emblem of her chastity, it is well known she has been kept by half the members of the house of commons and of the gambling clubs, nay, has walked the streets and been prostituted to hackney-coachmen, pickpockets, and street-robbers. And here you have brought her into the country, to seduce your sober neighbours, who formerly paid me great attention; but now there is not a gentleman in the parish except the vicar, who shews me the least regard, and I only see him once or twice a week, as he rides out with me 'squire's huntsman; for as the squire himself, whom I used frequently to visit, and who was always glad to see me, he now follows your example, and curses me if ever I am seen at his door."

I was here again beginning to make apologies; and to pacify her, made her a compliment on her beauty; but she proceeded:

"I am now come to court you, sir; yet, as I can never get sight of you, and have nobody to speak in my favour, indignation forces me to violate the rules of decorum, and to say, that I think myself much superiour in beauty, sprightliness, and every virtuous quality, to this harridan, whom you are so fond of; and have had more compliments paid me (even by the best poets of the age) without any other ornaments than a few wild flowers, than she ever had in her jewels and spangles, which glitter about her autumnal countenance, and which (by the way) she has only borrowed (if not pilfered) from an illustrious friend of mine; which, however, she never appears in but clandestinely, being ashamed to wear them in his presence or in mine.

In short, sir, if I could once detach you from this Ethiopian queen, (as Dr. Young calls her by way of sneer) I have the vanity to think that my charms, such as they are, would make a proper impression on your heart, and you would be unwilling to pass a single day without seeing me; and I will venture to say, you would receive more pleasure, as well as improvement, from the company to which I could introduce you, than from your present connexion. I am a particular acquaintance and friend of those celebrated and accomplished

young ladies whom you used to talk of when you came from school, called, as an honourable distinction, "The Nine Sisters;" who, though no great fortunes, are as much courted and caressed as any young women in the kingdom, of their humble rank and retired way of life.

"I must confess, indeed, that I am much less in vogue amongst people in high life than I was formerly; Nay, I am sorry to say, that of late I meet with but little respect even in the city, except by some of the lowest and most industrious of the inhabitants; so that I now spend most of my time amongst the honest laborious peasants in the country; who, I hope, for their own sake as well as that of the community, will continue to regard me."

I listened with attention to her discourse; and notwithstanding the few sallies of resentment, which only added spirit to her features, I was charmed with the character of native sweetness which appeared in her countenance; and having now recollected something of her person, I said, with some confusion, "that I was sorry I had so long been deprived of her visits, and should be happy to renew my acquaintance; and added that I now remembered having often seen her in my youth, and that my mother used to call her, 'her dear Aurora; but having unhappily got acquainted with the widow Hecatissa in town, I owned she had engrossed too much of my time and attention; that for the future, however, I hoped to see *her* often, and would take effectual care to have her admitted, whenever she would condescend to honour me with her visits."

I was going on, when a glow of splendour, like the rising of the sun, shone around her, and flashed in my face; and she vanished from my sight.

I drew my curtains more closely round me; turned from the window; went to sleep again—till noon—and have not seen the fair Aurora since.

A RANDOM SHOT.

A CLERGYMAN of some wit, who would rather lose his friend than his jest, having written some verses on a scolding wife, when his patron came to see him, hearing them repeated, requested he might have a copy. The parson imprudently replied, 'tis needless, sir, to give *you* a *copy*, for you have the *original*. This being unluckily a strict fact, did not forward the parson's preferment.

Poetical Department.

ORIGINAL.

ODE TO A LADY'S FOOT.

HAIL muse! thy vot'ry's pray'r attend,
In needful hour my soul befriend;
Hail harmonists! O, hear me all ye
Queens, goddesses—what may I call ye?
Whether along your sacred mountains
You stray, or dabble in your fountains;
Whether you sit by flow'ry meadows,
Or pensive streams hung o'er with shadows;
Whether in silent groves you're sitting,
Or muse where cooling founts are dripping—
O, hither come, and see—worth seeing,
The neatest, sweetest foot in being!
Teach me its beauties to illustrate,
With sentiment and language first rate.
A foot!—thy bard would think it bliss,
Fair *owner*, thy fair foot to kiss:
And were all ladies' feet like thine,
And all men's tastes as good as mine,
In ev'ry learn'd enlighten'd nation,
Then kissing feet would come in fashion.
Fair Miss, to sing your *lowest* part,
Stands high in my esteem and heart—
I do this moment dedicate,
(No matter what may be its fate)
Exclusively this very poem,
With all its fame and beauty to 'em!
And are not feet the base and prop
Of all the tow'ring part on top?
Do they not out of mischiefs draw men,
In which their heads do often throw them,
When drunk, of reason quite forsaken,
Are they by them not homewards taken?
They bear them safe by many a ditch,
In which their heads would let them pitch.
When courage fails to bear men out,
Do not their feet wheel them about?
O, yet 'tis possible the foot,
Will soon be crawling into note,

If it is oft a *fairer* part,
Like *thine* fair Miss, than head or heart.—
And from the daily change of fashion,
In which the ladies boldly dash on,
Some new discov'ries may be made,
And new and wond'rous things display'd,
Behold their hair, how close they dock'd it,
There was not what would fill a locket:
Each lock now forms a pretty ringlet,
Just like a cork-screw or a gimblet.
Lo! by that art which women blesses,
(With help of dentists, paints and dresses)
She who could hardly boast a feature
Denoting her a human creature,
Exalted to a goddess-level—
An angel of a painted devil!
To prove the grand effect of art,
It is enough the eye to dart,
First to their toilets when they rise,
Unpainted and without disguise—
Then to a ball-room where a cluster
Completely rigg'd do monthly muster,
Killing their thousands with their lustre,
Making the sage and plodding lawyer
Forsake his '*terminer* and *oyer*;'
Making the doctor at their sight,
Commence *depletion* and *low diet*,
Forsake, by conquering love confounded,
The mortar which so late he pounded,
And after boldly daring death,
To master Cupid yield his breath!
—Making the drooping students fly
From their dull studies whilst they sigh
'*Et nos cedamus amori.*'——
If, independent of the head
Or heart, such wonders are display'd,
May not we bring into repute,
That most important part, the foot?
Yet should the foot in future time,
E'en rank as *humble* as my rhime,
I'm at the *bottom*, and must claim,
Myself the theory, curse or fame,
T'avoid of plagiarism the danger,
Take note, I sign myself THE STRANGER.

ORIGINAL.

ADDRESS TO A WOOD-ROBIN.

SWEET bird! most tuneful of the wood,
Come warble me thy softest song,
What brings thee to this solitude,
To chant thy mellow strain alone?

Sought you like me those lonely rocks,
To sing in this romantic grove,
My dear, loved solitary walks?
Art thou, sweet bird, like me, in love?

O hast thou lost thy lovely mate,
And hast to mourn her no sad air,
No dirge well suited to thy fate,
To soothe thy sorrow and despair?

Oh! if thou hast, come perch thee near,
And melancholy greet the spring;
Sing thy sad notes, far banish fear,
And make this silent valley ring.

Ah! now you sweetly, sweetly sing,
Now careless fly from tree to tree,
Now pick thy pretty glossy wing,
Nor turn thee once to notice me!

But ah! my friendship you deny,
My offer'd kindness cannot move;
Sweet robin, though from me you fly,
Tho' thou art cruel, yet I love!

In the green grove or prickly brake,
A deadly foe you soon may meet,
Some cunning, sly, deceitful snake,
Be charm'd, and fall by his deceit!

SUSAN, as thou art, once was fair,
And sung sweet bird more sweet than thee;
Of ev'ry grace she had a share,
As thou dost now, she turn'd from me.

A cunning, sly seducer came,
And O! in evil hour for me,
Charm'd my loved fair of worth and fame,
By serpent art and subtlety.

'Tis like the rib itself, a crooked thing!
Strait as an arrow too, round as a ring!
'Tis like a beacon on the nuptial shores,
'Tis like Vesuvius too, where thunder roars!
A dread vulcano, from whose womb of fires,
Destruction rolls, and ruin swift retires!
'Tis like a will-o'-wisp, that lures astray
The weary trav'ler from his nightly way,
Thro' bogs and quicksands, brakes and mirey sloughs;
Hedges and ditches, where! Heaven only knows!
Blind as a bat that shuns the noon-day skies;
And like an ARGUS too, all over eyes!
'Tis like an old man, 'tis a doating elf,
And like a VENUS, for 'tis like itself!
Calm as the sea, unruffled by a breeze,
And like ten thousand thunders! if you please.
'Tis also like a pretty woman's kiss,
Because 'tis nought but transitory bliss!
'Tis like an echo, never to be seen,
Also, because it doth rebound again!
'Tis like a bee, because it hath a sting,
And like a ghost, because like ev'ry thing!
A breath! a blast! its object gain'd will prove,
There's nought substantial to be found in love!
In short, without it man would wretched be,
And with it, be involv'd in misery!
What can be done?—the answer is at hand,
"Be wise betimes," and truly understand
That love and lust too nearly are allied:
Then shun the one, and let it be thy pride
To seek the other, cast the chaff away,
And love will smile as cheerful as the day. E.

*** The above production was handed to the Editor for publication by its Author; it has already appeared in a country paper, since which it has received considerable correction: It is of such a singular kind, that the Editor does not think he would have been justifiable in withholding it from the public: The contrariety of love *and lust*, we think would have been a better title—but it cannot be criticised—it is *contrariety*, and sets all rules at defiance; a word or two only is sufficient—Love in its real acceptation, includes every thing that is praise-worthy, and no idea can be attached to it embracing the slightest impurity—GOD IS LOVE.

☞ An interview with '*The Stranger*' is requested.

END OF VOL. I.

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